286 Among the Choroti, I have only seen a very few individuals wearing
291 the poncho, and the only specimen of this garment I succeeded in obtaining belonged to a half-grown youth. This poncho (fig. 35) consists of a woollen fabric, 160 cm long and 61 cm broad, in the middle of which there is a slit, 26.5 cm in length. The weaving consists of two-threaded, tightly spun yarn of greyish white (the natural colour of the wool) and red (now faded). Its ornamental design is formed by three broad, decorated strips, woven on double warp, so that on one side the pattern shows greyish white on red ground, and on the other side red, on greyish white ground. The fabric between these strips is rep, with the woof of greyish white yarn. Whether this poncho is of Choroti weaving, one cannot be certain. Possibly it has been obtained by Choroti from their Ashluslay neighbours, seeing that similar garments are not uncommon among the latter.[1]

[531]

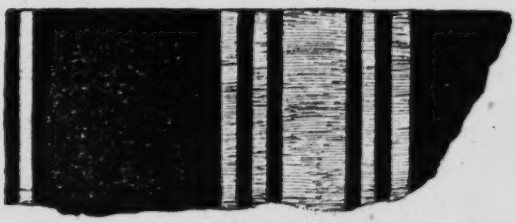

Fig. 33. Corner of man's mantle which is 204 cm long and 185 cm wide, of brownish-red wool, woven with groups of greyish-yellow stripes. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. 1/4. Riksm. 03. 3. 1.

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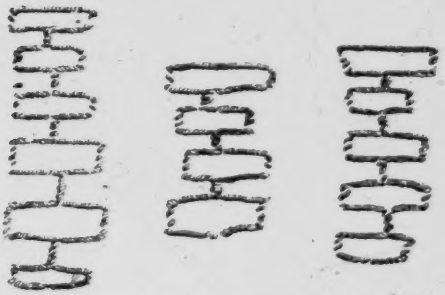

Fig. 34. Ornaments (probably property marks), placed in the middle of the mantle, a detail of which is seen in fig. 33. 1/2.

In the huts of the Choroti
292 I frequently came across a kind of thick shirts, knitted from tightly spun
●714 caraguatá-fibre threads (fig. 36), but I never saw them in use. In reply to my questions as to the reason for this, I was told that these garments are chiefly worn in fighting, when they are used as a protection against
[171] arrows. Caraguatá shirts are also used by the Ashluslay and the Mataco,[2] but in the literature on those Indians I have found no reference as to their being used as a protection against arrows. The Chiriguano, however,

[1] Nordenskiöld (11), pp. 111 and 112.
[2] Nordenskiöld (11), p. 107.

1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6

as well as the Chaco tribes of the Guaikurú group, like the Choroti, wear these garments as war shirts.[1] In all the tribes just referred to (and the Ashluslay and Mataco as well), such shirts are worn exclusively by the men. The Caraguatá shirt here reproduced is knitted very tightly and closely (fig. 37), and, although its length is only 56 cm, exclusive of the shoulder straps, it weighs as much as 1.4 kg. The stripes that are worked in by way of ornamentation, have been formed by using string dyed black, and string dyed brown, alternately, in knitting. The parts that are between the stripes consist of undyed fibre. At the bottom edge of the shirt, small pieces of red and yellowish brown cloth have been tacked on; these originate from the whites.

Fig. 35. Child's poncho (a boy's) of wool, with woven ornaments. Ground colour brownish-red; ornament yellowish-grey. Choroti (probably manufactured among some other tribe). Gran Chaco. Bolivia. 1/2. Riksm. 03. 3. 4.

These mail shirts of caraguatá fibre string are exceedingly well manufactured, and undoubtedly form a good protection against the Chaco Indians' arrows, which are usually wooden pointed. Arrows with rod-shaped, iron wire points, or with leaf-like, edged, iron heads, on the other hand, would probably pierce even the thickest and most closely knitted caraguatá shirt. The shoulder straps in these mail shirts are knitted considerably thinner and less closely than the rest of the shirt, and this is only natural, as the function of the straps is to suspend the shirt, and not to give protection against arrows. Besides, they could only be hit by arrows dipping at an angle from above.

[1] Krickeberg (1), p. 131.

1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6

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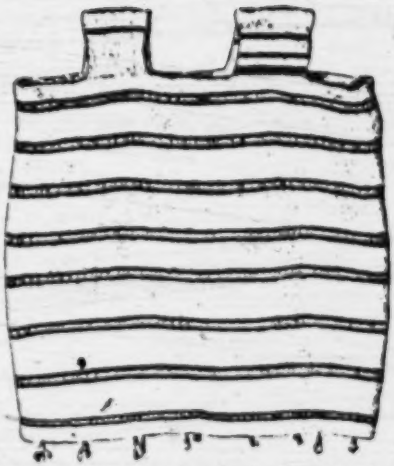

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[284]

Fig. 36. Mail shirt, knitted of caraguatá string. Worn principally as a protection against arrows. Choroti. Gran Chaco, Bolivia. ¹/₆. Riksm. 03. 3. 382.

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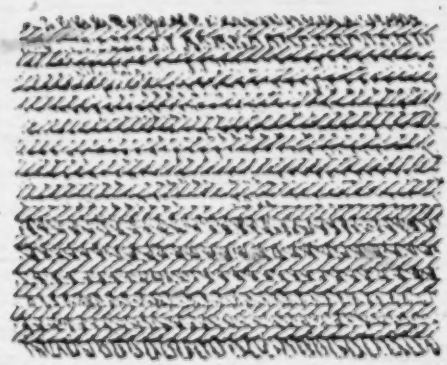

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Fig. 37. Enlarged detail of mail shirt, fig. 36. Natural size.

It is worthy of note that the Choroti also manufacture another protective garment out of caraguatá, namely a sort of stockings. This footgear is put on for wading (in fishing), as a protection against the teeth of the terribly sharp-biting palometa fish.[1]

To protect the legs from spiny plants, I have seen Choroti using a kind of long deerskin leggings, laced on with leather straps. The legging here reproduced in fig. 38, which has a height of 71 cm, reached well above the knee of its wearer. Some of the Choroti make use of sandals,[2] but I have myself never seen them worn by these Indians.

The men generally wear their hair of a medium length i. e., down to the shoulders, or the shoulder blades (figs. 16—18, 39 and 83) — but I have also seen Choroti with hair so long as almost to reach the waist. The hair is usually tied round with a woollen frontlet (fig. 39), or a frontlet of palm leaves (fig. 24), or birdskin (fig. 17), but it may also be worn loosely hanging down (fig. 53). Frequently the hair is tied into a brush-like bunch at the nape of the neck (fig. 39). Woollen frontlets are generally furnished with simple, tasteful, ornamentation (figs. 39

[1] Nordenskiöld (13), p. 110.
[2] Nordenskiöld (11), pp. 113, 114.

1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6

Fig. 110. War club, of hard, heavy wood (palo mataco). Choroti, Gran Chaco, Bolivia. 1/3 Riksm. 10. 3. 92.

As war weapons the Choroti use, beside bows and arrows, short, round-handled clubs of some very hard and heavy wood, usually palo mataco. The head and handle of the clubs is always carved in one piece (fig. 110). With these seemingly not very formidable weapons, the Indians are able — on account of the great hardness, heaviness and strength of the club material — to deal terrible blows, and they know how to use them with great skill.

In fighting their rivals, the Choroti women sometimes use knuckle-dusters of tapir hide or wood,[1] the latter being of a type identical with specimens found in ancient Indian graves in the mountain region to the west.[2] The Choroti use also bone awls as daggers. A bone awl especially suitable for a weapon is reproduced in fig. 111. It consists of the lower part of the leg-bone of a small deer; the foot serves for a handle, and the hoofs forms an excellent pommel. The weapon fits the hand very well when the thumb rests against the sole of the hoof.

For cutting up game, the Choroti use knives made of sharp-edged cane splinters. Knives and pomiards, of cane, have been very extensively used in South America. Even among tribes possessing knives of stone or metal, to this day knives of cane are being used in certain ritual ceremonies. Thus Bolinder, for example, mentions that among the Ijca Indians of Northern Columbia, in childbirth the navel is cut with a cane splinter.[3]

Fig. 111. Awl, made out of a shank bone of a small deer. Bone awls are sometimes used as pomiards. Choroti, Gran Chaco, Bolivia. 2/3. Riksm. 03. 3. 181.

The Choroti do not, however, possess only weapons of offence, but also weapons of defence. When on the subject on dress, I have described the mail shirts, made of closely woven, thick

[1] Nordenskiöld (11), p. 55 and 56; also (13), p. 81.
[2] von Rosen (1), pp. 203 and 204.
[3] Bolinder (1), pp. 240 and 243.

1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6

714 caraguatá string, that are used by the Choroti as a protection against arrows (fig. 36), and have mentioned the protective abdominal rawhide belts that they put to the same use.

To many it may sound strange that mail shirts made only from vegetable fibre actually should be able to afford effective protection against arrows and other sharp-pointed, or edged, weapons. Body armour of this kind has, however, been used by many different peoples, and even as early a writer as Homer makes mention of »linen cuirasses».[1] When Herodotus makes a list of the weapons of offence and defence carried by King Xerxes' Assyrian auxiliaries, this list also includes »cuirasses made of linen».[2] Textile armour is, besides, also referred to by several ancient Greek and Roman authors. In the tales of the early history of Rome, we can read of Aulus Cornelius, a leader of Roman horse, how in battle he stripped Lars Tolumnius, the king of Vejentes, of a »linen cuirass» and solemnly dedicated it, among »spolia opima», to Jupiter Feretrius, at his temple on the Capitolium.[3] This, it must be admitted, undoubtedly points to the great esteem in which these defensive weapons must have been held. That the fibre mail shirts of the Choroti form a rather safe protection against the wood-tipped arrows that are generally used on the Chaco, is a circumstance I have already set forth.

726 411 Occasionally the Choroti make use of incendiary arrows for the purpose of setting fire to the villages of their enemies. On our way home from the Pilcomayo, in Argentine territory we passed a sugar plantation, to which Indians from different parts of the Chaco had come for work. Two tribes, between whom old enmity existed, had erected temporary villages for themselves near the plantation, and, for some reason or other, the old hostility was kindled into flame, so that it came to open fighting. The owner of the plantation told us that, on the night before our arrival, the Indians had shot incendiary arrows at each other's villages, and that by this means they had managed to set several huts on fire. We could quite believe that the scene then enacted was both terrifying and grand, with the fire-carrying arrows flying about like rockets in the night, whilst the war cries of the Indians made accompaniment to the battle.

[1] Homer (1), epic 2, verse 830.
[2] Herodotus (1), 7: 58–64, p. 471, Lindskog's translation.
[3] Neumann (1), p. 385.